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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by KATHLEEN BLISS

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A QUESTION which we are frequently asked in one form or another is what is the relationship of the work of a central group like the Christian Frontier Council and of the large issues in the nation's life which are frequently discussed in the News-Letter to the life which Christians lead in parishes and congregations up and down the country and remote from London.

NEWS-LETTER

WHAT AND WHERE IS THE FRONTIER ?

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EMIL BRUNNER'S "POPULAR AXIOMS"

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INCENTIVES TO WORK
BY
T. M. HERON

WHAT AND WHERE IS THE FRONTIER ?

To help us in finding an answer to these very proper questions, those responsible for the work of the Christian News-Letter and Frontier Council invited some thirty clergy and ministers to meet with us for the best part of three days and talk the matter over. They came from widely differing types of parishes and congregations all over England : six came from Scotland. Writing about the discussions afterwards one of them said, "Naturally we weren't all in agreement, nor did we all get the same profit, but I think you'll find that it wasn't just another pleasant get-together : things will happen as a result." From the point of view of the News-Letter the encounter was of the greatest value.

In the sense in which it is used in the title, *Christian Frontier Council*, and is gaining in currency, we find, else-

where, the *frontier* exists wherever the Church exists. Outside the borders of the institutional Church, pressing up against the walls of every building devoted to specifically Christian purposes, lies the everyday secular world. From the point of view of the Church the world is the field of the Christian man's obedience. It is clear from the Scriptures that when a man comes to judgment he will be asked what he *did* with cups of cold water, and bread and clothing, that is to say, in his work and business, in his relations with creditors and debtors and his everyday living with neighbours, and he will not be able to evade the issue by inviting attention to his activities as churchwarden, or his participation in a discussion group on a Christian Social Order, important as these undoubtedly are. Every Christian, therefore, lives " on the frontier " and has to discover and act upon his Christian obedience in the work he does and in his political responsibilities, small or great, as well as in his leisure time.

What is being done to help the ordinary Christian layman to discover what Christian obedience means for him as worker and citizen ? Supposing we consider for a moment what is done in our churches to help those who serve the Church as teachers in Sunday Schools. There are books and journals : the Anglicans and the Free Churches have specialists whose sole concern it is to advise and train Sunday School teachers : there are frequent conferences and colleges holding regular courses of training. But what about the man who wants to obey God in his calling as a shop steward ? He can find general Christian ethical teaching, and general Christian social teaching, and he gets some moral guidance from the Bible and probably from the pulpit. But if he wants to discover what his Christian obedience should be in the matter of the closed shop, where is he to go ? There are no skilled advisers, no regular conferences, and he lacks the means whereby he can get into contact with fellow-Christian shop stewards who share his difficulties.

We are not suggesting by the comparison that what is needed in the parishes is the same kind of organization as we have for Sunday School work or for youth work. The

comparison merely serves to show that so far very little work has been done on this vital question. If more evidence is needed, we can take the experience of the religious broadcasting department of the B.B.C. The most popular of its religious talks are the series, repeated at intervals, called "My Faith and My Job", in which Christians come and speak of their faith in relation to their work as farmers, miners or accountants. Their popularity indicates that there is a feeling of need for help along these lines. But no series of talks is so difficult to arrange, because the number of Christian men and women who have thought through their faith and have a clearly held position on which they base their action in their daily work is very small. Constant search is carried on by the religious department to find such men and women and is frequently unfruitful.

FRONTIER WORK IN THE PARISHES

Yet in another sense the work of helping men to obey God in their secular callings and as citizens is going on in quiet ways in many parishes and congregations where some minister or layman is alive to the problem. Part of the difficulty is that many clergy and ministers know that the problem exists, but perforce lack the specialized knowledge of the internal stresses of secular callings. But more striking is the fact that thousands of laymen are not aware of the problem as a problem, but conceive their duty as Christians to have been done if at their work they abstain from foul language, football pools and sweepstakes and strong drink. These may indeed be highly important forms of Christian witness, but they are not what we are talking about at the present moment. There is, therefore, a task to be done within the Church in awakening the consciences of laymen on these matters.

A Scottish minister in a large rural parish in which nearly every person was at least nominally connected with the Church got together a group of farmers and potato-growers. For a whole winter they studied together Emil Brunner's *The Divine Imperative* (what stronger indication could there be that the Scots have preserved their mental toughness and

endurance ?). It was impossible to study this book without calling into review the daily work of these men, and the upshot was that a number of them decided that certain practices in common use in the vicinity would have to be abandoned. One farmer entirely overhauled the wage rates of his employees and discussed with them the vexed question of the tenancy of tied cottages. These decisions were made and adhered to at considerable financial loss.

This was a case in which action taken in the Church meant not only that Christian men and women learned to obey God in their daily work, but that the secular life of the community was in some degree affected. But few parishes in modern times offer the two conditions which pertained here—that a large proportion of the population had a tenuous connection with the Church, and that they were nearly all employed in a single occupation. In most places only a tiny minority are connected with the Church, which seems remote from the secular life of the community.

Another minister told us of his experiences in a parish where shipbuilding was the main industry. The life of the shipyards and the life of the local congregation were about as far apart as they could possibly be. The minister had been during the war one of a small number of men who had committed themselves when they returned from the war to any action which might seem to them necessary to quicken and raise the standard of the life of any local community in which they lived. He therefore set himself to understand the work of these shipbuilders, their problems, thoughts and feelings. Purely on a basis of friendship he came to know what their attitude towards their work was. They were being encouraged to build more ships. They argued that if they worked fast now, in five years there would be no work for most of them to do, and that therefore they must work slow. They argued that it was not their business to see that every rivet went in true, that was the job of the man who came along behind and inspected. He found that in the local council a single party had been entrenched for ten years and was narrow and self-regarding. After consultation with members of his congregation, he entered the

council on their behalf and now forms an opposition of one. This man has, as it were, lived on the far side of the frontier, and from the first step of leaving the secular world, he has now to look at the remoteness of the Church and see whether from this new vantage any new light is thrown on a problem of which many are aware and few are able to remedy.

This is clearly not the kind of action which it would be right for every priest or minister to take, but it is a response of a Christian mind to a dark situation. In other parishes there were groups of Christian laymen thinking about this problem. One minister had a Christian News-Letter group of working men. One of the difficulties is that this kind of frontier work does not always lend itself to action on a purely parochial basis, and it is our hope that as the work of the Christian Frontier Council develops there may be an increasing flow of experience between Churches or groups of men and women who are considering their responsibilities "on the frontier". And, of course, there is "frontier work" going on round other centres of Christian activity.[1]

Another difficulty which has to be overcome is that we cannot expect to find text books for action in this field. The secular world in which Christian men and women have to learn to obey is constantly changing and the Christian has to discover how to respond to each new situation as it arises. By the time a book has been written dealing with the closed shop, the issue is dead and a new one has taken its place. The chief means of making headway is for Christian men and women in a given place to establish communication with each other and begin to talk things out and find their way forward by using the data of their own experience. They will probably find that they need the help of, and can establish links with, men and women who are on the fringes of the Church, some of whom have left it in favour of more active participation in political and professional work.

Meanwhile, one general observation came out clearly from our consultation. One of our problems is that the

[1] e.g. branches of the Christian Workers' League being fostered in Scotland by the Iona Community, on the line of the Jocist movement.

Church has never fully accepted the fact of an industrial society or believed that God is at work quite as effectively in history since the industrial revolution as he was before it. Much Christian thinking and writing contains openly or by inference the hope that there may be some way back, some escape from our machines. Industrial society has robbed most men of two things which men have possessed since the beginnings of history—a tool and a skill. To such men all doctrines or work which are based upon the conception of exercising a craft for the glory of God by direct delight in the work of men's hands are totally irrelevant. "If I were to talk that stuff," said an industrial chaplain, "to the chaps I talk to in the mine, well, I don't think I'd ever come out again." But Reinhold Niebuhr takes this matter further by pointing out that while the industrial society has brought the individual man these losses, it has also brought certain concrete gains, of which the chief is that an industrial society gives to men the hope of a very greatly enriched and enlarged life of community. By entering into co-operation in productive tasks, not only with the few men whom he sees, but with countless thousands engaged on other processes elsewhere, the individual man becomes a member of a larger and richer community.

If this is true, the Christian obedience of the layman become that of realizing potential community rather than of drawing in his skirts from certain defilements. If he has his eye on this as his main obedience, the other matters which at present often form the horizon of the ordinary man's perception of Christian obedience, such as not swearing, fall into perspective. What threatens our nation now is the failure of many persons and groups of people and institutions within it to grow to that larger sense of community which was broadly achieved under the impetus of war and has largely departed from us in this equally grave crisis of post-war recovery. Never was the gospel of *koinonia* more needed, and Christians have to work for it in terms of an industrial nation discovering an enlarged conception of the love of neighbour.

THE AXIOMS OF MODERN MAN

A small book has now been published by the World Council of Churches [1] which describes in outline the preparations of the first Assembly and the work of the four preparatory study commissions (see also C.N-L. No. 268). It is for clergy, ministers and others who are already interested in the World Council. A popular presentation is in preparation and we will inform our readers when it is ready.

The second commission deals with evangelism[2] in all its aspects, from missionary work among primitive animists to problems of evangelism in a post-Christian society. Any consideration of the task of evangelism in a post-Christian society should include an understanding of what, in fact, are the underlying axioms by which the modern man lives his life and forms his opinions.

The strength of these axioms lies chiefly in the fact that they are unconsciously held. They come to the surface frequently in proverbial sayings and tags, and some of them find expression in popular songs. A start has been made, setting down these axioms in the form of a set of aphorisms. This preliminary list has been compiled by Professor Emil Brunner. It omits an important factor in the British situation, namely, that in this country a large number of people who do not call themselves Christians, hold with considerable tenacity Christian axioms.

Here is Professor Brunner's list :—

1. Everything is relative ; there is no absolute truth.
2. What cannot be proved is uncertain, probably unreal.
3. Scientific knowledge is certain and is the standard of truth ; matters of faith are uncertain.
4. Nobody knows what is beyond death, or whether there is anything beyond death.
5. The visible and tangible is the standard of reality. The less visible, the less real.

[1] *Man's Disorder and God's Design*: edited by John C. Bennett, S.C.M. Press, 1s. 6d.

[2] Secretary, Bishop Neill, Trinity College, Cambridge.

6. The big things are the great things. Because man is so small in relation to this big universe he is also little.

7. I cannot help being what I am and how I am.

8. Freedom is independence. Therefore any kind of dependence is in opposition to freedom.

9. Justice is equality, and therefore any kind of inequality is the negation of justice.

10. Every department of human life and civilization exists in its own rights. To put religion in the first place is a form of arrogance and intolerance.

11. Man is free to have or not to have a relation to what religion calls God.

12. Freedom is exclusive of " must ". Where man must he is not free.

13. Many are more than one, therefore the things of the many are more than those of the one.

14. There are laws of destiny which determine everything.

15. Religion has its rights, if it has any, within the framework of civilized life. It is, at best, an expression of the best of human nature.

16. True humanity is measured by tolerance; tolerance however is the attitude which grants to one's opponent the same measure of truth as one claims for one's own.

THE SUPPLEMENT

Mr. T. M. Heron is an industrialist and is a member of the Christian Frontier Council. We would particularly like to draw our readers' attention to his essay on " Work " in the volume *Prospect for Christendom*. His supplement deals with a topical aspect of a problem which he there treated in broader terms.

Kathleen Bliss

THE INCENTIVE TO WORK

BY T. M. HERON

PUT a healthy new-born babe to its mother's breast and straightway it begins to work for its living. Maroon an able-bodied man on an uninhabited island and without much ado he will set his wits and energies to work to provide his body with the food and shelter it requires. God has endowed each of His creatures with an instinctive will to labour for the sake of its own survival. And He has set them in a world which always provides natural inducements and compulsions to ensure survival by stimulating appropriate activity. This activity we call WORK.

If this is a true picture, why do we find that in all ages some men are work-shy? And why do we find, time after time in our history, periods when overseers and task-masters are loud in their complaint that the labourers under their charge simply will not do a fair day's work if it can possibly be avoided? The present search for "an incentive to work" is but a sign that in this age the bureaucrats and industrial magnates who order most of our work are by no means happy about the results which may be expected if, with "Full Employment", the fear of destitution ceases to spur the labourers' effort. As yet, our sophisticated task masters, their resolution backed by the enormous productive capacity of the machinery they control, are loath to resort to compulsion, and the reluctance is to their credit. But there are always the natural compulsions at work, and if one section of the community does not pull its weight a greater burden must inevitably fall upon another; moreover, the quantity of wealth available for the community's enjoyment will be diminished. Whenever this process is allowed to proceed too far, economic folly producing scarcity, a situation arises in which the

overseer's " patience " is bound to become " exhausted ". A return to slavery then becomes regarded as preferable to starvation, for the community also possesses an instinctive will to survive. It is for this reason that, whilst the standard of living is rising and an optimistic mood still prevails, we should try to arm ourselves with enduring answers to questions like the two with which this paragraph begins. For if a pessimistic mood takes possession of us we shall hardly avoid legislation of the sort that proceeds from a cynical view of man and of his place in the world.

NATURAL INDUCEMENTS AND COMPULSIONS

We shall begin by considering a case where the natural inducements and compulsions direct the work of the community in its most perfect form—a human family isolated from the rest of mankind and left to fend for itself amidst surroundings which offer opportunities for human survival.

Obviously the father, the mother and the children, each person according to his strength and ability, will be called upon to share the work which will be necessary if all are to be fed and sheltered. They will have to co-operate. And whatever co-operation is achieved will be found to derive from inducements and penalties which Nature provides. The joy of achievement, the fear of failure ; the pleasure of giving, the distaste for having to beg ; the interest in an experiment, the dissatisfaction with inadequate tools ; the warmth of a fire, the deadening effect of the cold ; the sight of someone happily lost in a job of work, the emptiness of feeling that one has nothing to do ; the desire of the scholar to learn, the fear of the experienced lest his hard won knowledge should not be passed on ; the pride of real ownership, the disgrace of having neglected what was entrusted to one's care ; the anticipation of a feast, the dread of inadequate diet ; all these and a thousand other considerations pull and prod man to his work, and to the extent that they do so in right and ordered measure, the work of this family will be likely to prosper.

" UNNATURAL " INDUCEMENTS AND COMPULSIONS

But there are other—and in a mediaeval sense " unnatural "—inducements and compulsions which, human nature being what it is, will exert their influence, and, to the extent that they do so, mar the work and militate against the well-being of every member of the family : the desire to lead, the fear of the leadership to which one is called ; the mean pleasure of keeping what someone else needs, the pride which refuses to accept any favour ; the craving for excitement, the flight from solitude ; the obsession with security, the fear of the loss inherent in a good venture ; the lust for praise, the fear of all reproof ; the passion for more size and quantity, the distrust of the small beginning ; the craving for the narcotic, the distaste for the rigours of the testing effort ; the inordinate indulgence of the physical senses, the refusal to discipline those senses ; and, finally, there is always the reward offered to pervert the judgment or corrupt the conduct.

These bad inducements and compulsions always exert their influence upon self-centred man, and if the work of the family is to go well, religion must come to their aid, for religion alone can give man his true centre. Even in the case of the family an exclusive preoccupation with its own values must defeat its purpose. Only a goal outside time and space can take man out of himself and by so doing enable his reason objectively to evaluate the good inducements and compulsions so that he may use his will to steer by them. It follows therefore that, if the family community is to prosper, arrangements will have to be made within its circle for the priest's function to be discharged as well as those of the administrator, the artist, the teacher and the labourer. And authority will have to be assumed to ensure that each of these functions is in fact discharged.

THE PRESENT SEARCH FOR AN INCENTIVE TO WORK

It may be asked, what has all this moralizing about the family got to do with the present situation ? Our Government is trying to get the work of the world done " without

resorting to compulsion"; and it is asking all men of goodwill to join in the search for an "incentive to labour" which will enable free men to produce the "plenty" which we now know can be ours. Does the Christian believe that there is such an incentive, or does he not?

If the question is couched in these terms, and unfortunately it mostly is, there is only one answer which the Christian can give.

No universal incentive can be devised. Positive inducement—a system of rewards alone—will not make men work always for the common good, taking the personal disadvantages and advantages with equanimity. There must be incentives; but there are moments in any known or conceivable system of production when "fallen man" will not identify his own interest with that of society. Then compulsion in fact comes into play in any case; and if the State has assumed a direct responsibility in economic affairs, the State is obliged to exercise a disciplinary power.

"The State is the return of the order of God upon the evil introduced by man's sin."[1] Behind all effective State enactment lies power, the power to compel; and that power will at times have to be used, for man is still prone to sin. It follows, therefore, that where the State insists upon assuming responsibility for the ordering of our work, the State will also have to assume not only the rewarding powers which the good employer always enjoyed being able to use, but, in addition, the compulsive ones which he very much disliked having to use. Furthermore, if the work is to go well, the State, again like the good employer, will have to try and make the inducements and compulsions to labour reflect the natural inducements and compulsions which are inherent in any jobs which man is called upon to tackle. Finally, the bad inducements and compulsions will have to be recognized for what they are, if a healthy resistance to them is to be set up and maintained, whilst the good induce-

[1] Sir Ernest Barker, in his introduction to St. Augustine's *The City of God*.

ments and compulsions are allowed to exert their influence upon our work. For nothing but ultimate loss and ruin can result from our harbouring the idea that, man being what he is, and our Religion and Culture being what they are, plenty can result from activities which are stimulated only by the *attractions* of the job ; or by the desire for the material wealth which it provides.

NATURAL INDUCEMENTS AND COMPULSIONS IN STATE-ORDERED INDUSTRY

Given the industrial situation which exists to-day, the question which our administrators ought to be asking themselves is this : How can the State order large-scale industries like those of coal mining, transport and banking, so that the natural inducements and compulsions will be brought to bear on all persons engaged in them in much the same way that these natural forces already operate in the small business or upon the independent craftsman ? And to this question a variety of answers ought to be expected, for it is a political question concerned with temporary measures for situations which change almost before they can be legislated for.

It may not, however, be out of place here, if, by way of illustrating the general argument, a few personal reflections upon " the coal problem " are set down, although the writer has no special technical qualifications for pronouncing judgment upon this particular industry.

1. *Exhortation.* The verbal encouragement to do what is laudable is a form of moral compulsion and as such has its place in any economy. But exhortation unaccompanied by positive example is bound to be sterile. If only a single pit could be run as a pit " ought to be run ", and if arrangements could then be made for miners from other pits to see it working, some at any rate of those who saw it would want to go back and in their own pits " do likewise ".

2. *Ownership.* To own a forty-millionth part of the pit one is working in cannot really give much satisfaction to

anyone; and the negative satisfaction, that the capitalist no longer owns it, is no substitute for real ownership. Even under a system of National Control and State Ownership of Mineral Rights it should be possible to allot Labour Shares in individual pits to the miners who are working in them. These Shares should be issued in proportion to the stakes which the miners have risked—the number of years worked and the value of the work done. Readers who are interested in the Valder Scheme for Labour Co-partnership and Ownership should consult Mr. David Barrend's recent articles in *The New English Weekly* and also Mr. Paul Derrick's writings on the subject in the same journal.

3. *Output.* An excessive emphasis upon "output" is bound to produce, in addition to the goods planned for, social consequences which weaken the life of the community. When unemployed miners were starving in the Welsh valleys, many of those who remained in the pits were compelled to work at a pace which was quite inhuman. For every extra ton of coal then won many more have since been lost, because, by winning the Coal, we lost the Man. The aim of industry should always be to produce men as well as goods. As insistently as we now ask for "output" we ought to be asking for *the special contributions in the worlds of sport, culture and religion* which the mining community, as a mining community, alone can give.[1]

4. *Operation Pluto.* Past neglect of the mines and mining villages leaves us owing the mining community a debt, which nothing less than a new "Operation Pluto" can discharge. On the one hand, a mining village as well designed as Welwyn Garden City would make men want to find work in their own town; on the other hand, wonderful new labour-saving machinery and equipment (designed for operations which the inventors themselves would want to carry out "in that way") would make men *want* to live in the town where that machinery was available for their use. And, since our landscape gardeners have no longer

[1] See *The New English Weekly* "Notes" on Grouse Moors for the Miners.

the Squire's parkland to operate upon, why cannot they be allowed to experiment with the tips and waste lands which surround our pits, continually reminding all who see them of our past rapacity?

5. *Responsibility.* Some form of democratic control for each pit ought to be worked out. Pit Management Councils should be set up, the voting for which should be one vote for each Labour Share which a man owned. Thus the experienced man and the man who was doing what was considered to be the most important work would have the democratic power which their services had earned for them. These local democracies ought not to compete with the existing Trade Unions and Managerial Associations, but should be concerned with the local and practical application of codes of professional conduct laid down by the National bodies. Moreover, each Pit Council should be encouraged to enter into legally binding contracts with the Central Authority for definite quantities of coal at definite prices. There can be no true partnership in industry unless the partners honestly share the losses as well as the rewards of their enterprise.

6. *Sharing the Drudgery.* There are still men and boys who feel the call of the pit and choose to make their labour "contribution" in the mines. And however inadequate their numbers in comparison with the size of the labour force required to get the coal we need, these genuine miners are the men upon whom we have to rely for the skill and enterprise without which the mines cannot possibly be expected to prosper. For this reason, it is to these men and to these men alone that the authority for the detail work of pit management should be entrusted. And, normally, in return for the pay which this mastership brings, these men and their apprentices should perform whatever exacting and disagreeable tasks their own work process brings in its train. Admission to their "closed shop", their local Mining Guild would be, as admission to the Law Society already is for another profession, a sign that a certain amount of grinding

work had already been accomplished. But to-day the Mining Industry is in an abnormal condition, and there appears to be more hard work calling to be done than there are free men offering to do it. Under the circumstances instead of allowing, still less exhorting, the miners to strain themselves to the uttermost, we ought to be organizing corps of volunteers to go to their help. There was an idea in the "Bevin Boys" Scheme which, applied to a system of Mining Guilds, might prove useful not only to the Mining Industry, but also to other industries which are already suffering from similar labour shortages. Set a period to a man's drudgery, convince him that as yet science has not been able to show us how it can be avoided, let him see that a good purpose is served by it, and men who are bored with their present jobs will respond.

To sum up, the whole aim and trend of our modern social legislation is to make available to each individual citizen that minimum standard of living which his status as a full member of an industrial civilization would appear to warrant. But this standard of living cannot in fact be made available unless our industries serve one another in a chain of ordered production, which for its efficiency depends upon contracts being given and accepted. It would appear, therefore, that the task before this age is that of retaining the benefits of "contract" whilst regaining those of "status" which the industrial revolution in its exuberance threw away.

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